

Minutes
State Board of Education Special Session
Monday, May 12, 2005

The Arizona State Board of Education held a Special Session at the Arizona Department of Education, 1535 West Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007. The meeting was called to order at 1:35 PM.

Members Present

Mr. Jesse Ary
Ms. Nadine Mathis Basha
Dr. Matthew Diethelm
Ms. JoAnne Hilde
Superintendent Tom Horne
Ms. Joanne Kramer
Ms. Anita Mendoza
Dr. Karen Nicodemus
Ms. Cecilia Owen
Dr. John Pedicone

Members Absent

Dr. Michael Crow

Board Business

Pledge of Allegiance, moment of silence and roll call.

Superintendent Horne stated that the Legislature passed the bill which reforms the rulemaking process for the State Board of Education. The new legislation requires two opportunities for public comment before a rule is adopted, which should take much less time to complete.

1. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Ms. Samantha Andrews Henry, addressed the State Board of Education:

- Grateful to be part of the AIMS process and thanked CTB and ADE for allowing her to participate
- Participation has changed, increased and deepened knowledge of AIMS and the state standards
- Not a bad process but we should not trust the process exclusively
- Need to know about the theoretical underpinnings used by the teachers making these decisions
 - Need to see the whole picture of the process and how the processes fit together
 - Processes and schedule kept teachers from questioning
 - Can trust that Arizona teachers have been able to take a standard process and paint it so that it will work to the best interest of Arizona's students
 - Can trust that the integrity of the processes laid out by CTB were earnestly followed by them and by the teachers
 - This should have garnered the best results for the students
- The SBE should seek to build a matrix of process
 - Get a better understanding of dips and highs and expectations between 8th and 10th grades
 - Consider purpose of smoothing and standard deviation
 - Why is there a feeling that the present must mirror the past
 - Consistency
 - Better public explanation
 - Or much more
- Explaining the AIMS decisions would be easier to accomplish if these points were addressed

2. Presentation, Discussion and Consideration To Approve Proposed Performance Level Standards for Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards

Dr. Karla L. Egan, Senior Research Manager, CTB/McGraw-Hill, distributed the AIMS Standard Setting Results from the past three-day process. (Please see materials in packet)

Dr. Egan pointed out the validity and satisfaction with the Standard Setting Process as reported by the participants:

- Validity of the process
 - 119 felt confident, 7 were neutral, and 2 disagreed that the Standard Setting Procedure produced valid standards
- Satisfaction with the process
 - Over 90% were satisfied with their group's final judgments

Dr. Egan noted that the evaluations were positive.

Dr. Egan reviewed the Cut Scores and Impact Data for Reading and Mathematics and then the Writing Cut Scores. Further discussion ensued regarding smoothing in writing, including:

- Linear trend line was applied to see the affect
 - Grade 5 is up a bit and grade 8 is down a bit and grade 10 is up a bit
- Student growth is mirrored after adjustments
- Smoothing done from research basis to be able to share what may happen and the effect to sophomores resulting in more students who are “meets” or above
- Teachers work from the consideration of public policy
- Looking at scale score/cut scores occurs after the standards setting
- Teachers work with impact data and the percentage of “meets” or “above”
- Need to make sure the scale score increases across the grades
- This is an experiment to see what would happen if smoothing were done in writing as per the SBE previous request

No discussions regarding using a Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) have been suggested and may not be part of the final decision. However, members are still considering this aspect.

Superintendent Horne clarified that we are looking for what grade for “exceeds” will yield an impact of 8% of high school students.

Dr. Nicodemus:

- Would like to see teachers' recommendations as a cut score across the grades and then see what happens to that score with smoothing applied
- SEM is still interesting

Superintendent Horne:

- SEM effect is to lower the cut score
- The teachers' recommendations already lower the cut score
- If we take what is already a very substantial lowering in cut scores and lower it still further with the SEM this would be going to extremes

Ms. Mendoza:

- Wanted to look at performance data with SEM applied
- Not comparing with last year
- SEM is a statistical supported measure which makes sense in a different way than applying a smoothing process which may change proficiency levels

Superintendent Horne:

- Smoothing process enables a gradual increase

Ms. Mendoza:

- If results are being reported accurately, why is there a need for an increasing scale score?

Superintendent Horne:

- Scale score is applied across all grade levels (more required of 5th graders than of 4th graders)
- After standards setting one group might have set the 5th grade scores that were less rigorous than

those set for the 4th grade and this would not make sense

- If there is a continuous scale score, each grade level has to demand more of the student than the previous grade level
- If this demand goes down instead of up, then the degree of rigor would be inconsistent

Dr. Nicodemus:

- Raw score is generated by teachers looking at the appropriate performance measure for students at a particular grade
- These materials show the number of items the student needs to answer correctly that would indicate the student is meeting that basic expectation
- The SBE is discussing this issue to determine whether or not students are receiving the kind of support and structure necessary to meet reasonable expectations
- If a class falls far below, do we manipulate the data so it appears they are not falling as far behind, or manipulate data to show a nice increase
- SEM feels less like manipulation to create a nice sequence that doesn't always occur and diminishes the standard

Superintendent Horne:

- Looking at what our expectation is rather than a reflection of what the kids did
- A certain amount of knowledge is required for a given grade level
- As the teachers set that level, they are setting an expectation
- trying to make standards among the teachers.
- If scores go down from 4th grade to 5th grade, it means teachers have applied inconsistent degrees of rigor

Dr. Pedicone:

- We are creating tests which need to have consistency from one grade level to another
- Need to look at the process necessary to get from one level to the next making sure kids are achieving more each year to reach these goals
- Look at what point it is necessary to bring cut score down to make this a smooth process
- Groups worked with these parameters in setting the standards but had difficulty in the writing because writing is subjective
- SEM makes less sense now and smoothing makes more sense because it is a function of trying to design a test to be a fair test along the way

Dr. Egan:

- What Dr. Pedicone said was right on

Superintendent Horne:

- It has been discussed previously that when standards setting was done before teachers were in separate silos for grades 3, 5, 8, and high school and did not communicate with each
- Standards were very different at each level with 65% proficiency at 3rd grade and 20% in 8th grade
- The 8th grade teachers applied too rigorous a standard which was not consistent with the other grades
- In this case there were some slight differences and the teachers came together to make the standards consistent with each other

Ms. Mendoza:

- Need to look at and choose questions that are of the same rigor
- Don't want to ignore some inherent issues such as:
 - Wanting higher cut scores in 8th grade math as the student should be ready for Algebra but fails
 - Is that the fault of the system or the student?
 - Need assurance we are not just accepting results but looking at test questions and adjusting to kids

- Need to continue looking at other parts of education, i.e., increase content

Superintendent Horne:

- ADE can give the assurance since teacher committees now select the field tested items for the tests

Dr. Pedicone:

- If 10th grade scores were lower would be more concerned so it is evident that progress is being made even though it is not reflected in 8th grade scores

Dr. Egan:

- As committee looked at the 8th grade smoothing process and at the trend line they noted that it didn't make sense knowing what they know about normal student progress and growth
- High school and 8th grade teachers came together to think holistically

Dr. Nicodemus:

- With ADE's work, good professional development for teachers, and a clear understanding of standards, still think we're writing the test now after the test has been taken

Dr. Pedicone:

- If this process had the level of integrity that is expected, we know what body of knowledge the kids are supposed to know and the questions are targeted and then let the kids fall out where they will, he would agree
- The trouble is that this was developed in a manner that has caused the SBE to go back and re-create and do damage control and make adjustments
- However, this has created a way to look at the process and this is probably the way to go
- SEM: what differences would occur in different groups if this was used, i.e. in the lower groups?

Dr. Egan:

- High school reading (page 18) shows combining grades 10/11 and up one SEM (more rigorous) have 60% correct expectation that goes to 63%

Dr. Pedicone:

- What happens to the students at the lower end of achievement
- See less activity (movement) at the lower end of the scale

Dr. Nicodemus:

- Start with teachers' evaluation that sets raw score
- Then researchers say an adjustment is necessary (smoothing)
- Further adjustments may be made for public policy reasons
 - Focused on '06 graduates
 - Is it logical to think that a student may test well on one day and not as well on the next day
 - Would apply the SEM around the student or around the test itself or the combination

Superintendent Horne:

- Students have multiple chances to take the test

Dr. Diethlem:

- Corrected some phraseology because he stated he is objecting to "reducing the cut scores" as a phrase that is being used
- This is a new test by a new group of teachers who have set test scores for the first time for this test
- Don't want to lose sight of the fact that this data will be used to classify and evaluate all schools in the state and considers this quite important

Ms. Hilde:

- Focus on term "dual purpose" rather than "the test" which is unique and significantly different
- Uncomfortable talking about going back which sets up a public thought that is not appropriate

Superintendent Horne:

- The high school test is AIMS only and not a dual purpose assessment
- The work being done here is only on the AIMS portion of the dual purpose assessment

- The norm referenced part of the dual purpose assessment is not affected

Dr. Egan:

- A graph of the high school reading shows curve of achievements and is not a bell-shaped curve
- Goal is to shift populations from the negative end of the curve and over time we have begun to make that shift
- We are standards-based education

Dr. Donna Lewis, Associate Superintendent, Accountability Division, Arizona Department of Education:

- Testing is an imperfect science and some teacher comments were:
 - This test is aligned to what we really teach
 - More accurate assessment this year
 - Two-part objective that should be a harder item
 - Gains being made instructionally

Ms. Hilde:

- Surprised at the high quality of thinking required of a 3rd grader
- Many questions took 2 -3 steps to solve
- Eye-opener that we are testing kids at that level
- Would like to see the test and see what it means

Dr. Lewis:

- Teachers were able to see that students are being prepared for the next levels of expectation
- On a content level, Dr. Lewis was assured regarding the quality of education

Ms. Owen:

- Has observed student achievement throughout the years
- Concerned about the public policy piece, legislature and the misuse of this test
- Test was not intended to be a graduation requirement
- Need to continue improving teacher effectiveness in the classroom
- Can't be sure we know what is going on in each classroom
- How can legislature be sure so quickly that this is the right move
- Teachers are doing their best in spite of inconsistencies regarding resources, socio-economic bias in the test
- Need to help the legislature understand that it is not a graduation gatekeeper

Dr. Pedicone:

- Agreed to look at an alternative pathway, "bridge"
- Won't have a comprehensive, diverse group in the employment area
- If population of students who don't pass the exam and therefore don't get through high school, are from a certain group, this is not acceptable
- Need to answer what is going to be done about the students
- Talk about what we can do since we can't control the legislature
- Not appropriate that there is only one way to graduation

Ms. Owen:

- Clarified any potential misunderstanding saying she clearly appreciates all work done by the Department and throughout the state
- She stated that she doesn't agree with law and process and whether what is happening inside schools is the appropriate process

Dr. Diethelm:

- Have to set rating scores to use AIMS in best manner possible
- Like to spend more time improving education than arguing over tests
- Suggested that alternatives could be discussed
- Noted the Board's appreciation of the committee's work of the past three days, that the Board is

inclined to mostly accept the committee's recommendations and is sympathetic to smoothing the writing for technical reasons and to the Superintendent's issue of high school writing "exceeds"

- Summarized possible motions per attachment noting Superintendent's proposal to use '04 raw cut scores less one SEM

Superintendent Horne:

- Heard last night that the other Board members don't agree with him
- Can have friendly disagreements
- Will record his decision in the final vote
- Further discussion is not needed regarding his proposal

Motion by Dr. Pedicone to accept the recommendations of the standards setting committee with the exception to adjust the "exceeds the standards" cut point for grade 10 writing on 8% of those students and include the smoothing that was recommended exclusive of the writing committee. Dr. Pedicone noted that the only change is to expand the 8% of "exceeds" in writing.

Dr. Diethelm noted that this means not smoothing the writing scores.

Motion seconded by Ms. Hilde who added a friendly amendment to adjust the scale score (linear score) in writing, for the 8th grade, so they are in alignment. Dr. Pedicone approved the amended motion as long as it doesn't affect the end line, the 10th grade end result.

Dr. Egan:

- This solves the problem of the vertical cut scores

Dr. Diethelm recapped the motion as accepting the recommendations of the standards setting committee as presented with the exception of adjusting the "exceeds" standards cut point for grade 10 writing such that 8% fall into the "exceeds" category and the 8th grade writing scales adjustment as proposed by CTB.

Dr. Egan clarified further that her understanding of the Board's motion is

- Accept the reading and math that resulted from standards setting, smoothed
- Accept the writing with the addition of adjusting the 8th grade "approaches" cut score for technical reasons
- Looking at the "exceeds" cut score in high school changing the raw score to 55 from 58

Dr. Egan pointed out, for clarification to the Board, that when looking at the writing data for 8th grade, 81% "meet" or "exceed" and in high school there will be 71%, so 10% of the students who think they are meeting the standard in grade 8 will no longer meet the standard on the high school test.

Dr. Nicodemus:

- Motion as presented by Dr. Pedicone is reflected in writing after smoothing relating to the raw score for the research purposes and not from an impact consideration

Dr. Egan:

- This smoothing actually reflects everything that was done.

Ms. Mendoza:

- Reminder that in the 8th grade and high school writing prompts different genres of writing were used
- Even though the results are different there are sound educational reasons for that difference

Dr. Pedicone:

- This was considered in the motion based on what was just said
- Concerned about what the curriculum will look like and whether students will get a false sense of being able to write well except it will be a different genre
- All right with this technical example as long as the field is aware of it; teachers in the 9th and 10th grades have to be clear on what the mission is
- Has to be communicated clearly to the field

Superintendent Horne:

- All high school AIMS questions are not persuasive

- Can be narrative
- It is kept as a secret so teachers teach all forms

Dr. Pedicone:

- Submitted that kids should do better if it is a familiar form of writing so cut scores are okay
- Will look at this again in a year to see if the right decisions were made

Dr. Diethelm:

- Next year the detail might be quite different
- Will be different items on the test
- Not a universal sample
- As the upcoming school classifications are done many of these things will directly affect what the Board is doing

Dr. Nicodemus:

- In talking about school accountability each test taken by the student is counted in the school's classification

Ms. Mendoza:

- Are some schools in peril if now perhaps only 71% are passing and last year 80% passed in high school writing?

Superintendent Horne:

- The State Board will have a chance to look at each one that comes to the State Board and an opportunity to mitigate changes in the test

Mr. Yanez reiterated the motion:

- To accept the recommendations of the standards setting committee with the following exceptions:
 - Adjust the "exceeds standards" cut points for grade 10 writing to 8% of the students
 - Adjust the 8th grade writing scale score as proposed by CTB

Roll call vote as follows:

Ms. Hilde: Aye

Superintendent Horne explained his vote: No

- *Proud of the process, efforts by the Department, CTB and the teacher committees*
- *Personal view is that the setting of per cent corrects at 60% and 59% is an error and should be set at 71% and 72%*
- *Believe the students have done much better on the test solely by virtue of the tutoring program efforts of the schools, motivations of the students and it would be clouded by perception of the percentages of 60% and 59%*
- *Wants to be on the record on that issue by voting no notwithstanding the terrific process and a good system*
- *Will work hard to help students pass the tests*

Mr. Ary explained his vote: Aye

- *Going to accept the recommendations*
- *Need to continue monitoring the need and try to bring out a test that truly is not reflective of socio bias*
- *The best way to elevate the best of our students is to find creative ways to elevate the least of our students*
- *The Board needs to make sure the test is balanced and looks at student needs for students in rural areas and reservation areas, minority students, those who fall far below and those who have potential to drop out*

Ms. Basha: Aye

Ms. Kramer: Aye

- *Concerned about students in "falls far below"*
- *For every grade level a student is behind it takes ½ hour per day of intervention to help them*

catch

- *Need to look at specific intervention*

Ms. Mendoza: Aye

- *Taking assurances of Department that there will be continued rigor looking at instruction accountability and especially interventions for the students in “falls far below” over and above traditional tutoring*
- *Need to look at instructional techniques interventions programs that are specifically designed to reach those students*
- *Share Mr. Horne’s concerns that, as this is the first year for this test and it is being used as a baseline that will be studied continually, the Board is now saying that the student meeting the standard is performing at 63% to 59%*

Dr. Nicodemus: Aye

- *In respect for the process and for the other members*
- *If the process was to bring the teachers together, need to respect that process as well*
- *Appreciated the community input*
- *Hope for further discussion*

Ms. Owen: Aye

Dr. Pedicone: Aye

- *Condition that at least one member of the Department of Education is here next year (who is here today)*
- *Important to honor the teachers who engaged in three-days of work and honor the process in making decisions about educational issues*
- *Need to have the courage to do what is right in spite of the political nature of this issue*
- *Must explain the State Board’s decisions and what makes sense*
- *The State Board next year will be responsible for the covenants made today*

Dr. Diethelm: Aye

- *Frustrated that the state doesn’t seem to have the will or commitment to do what needs to be done and what is clearly demonstrated to be needed by these assessments*
- *Concerned that the bar should be being raised and that the perception is that this is not being done*
- *As we look forward, should look forward to raising the bar and increasing expectations and providing resources so students can achieve high standards.*

Final Vote Count: Aye = 9; No = 1; Absent = 1. Motion passes.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn by Dr. Nicodemus. Seconded by Dr. Pedicone. Meeting adjourned at 3:15PM.